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ABSTRACT

Research has established the important and positive relationship between informal student-faculty interactions and student retention. To add to the scant research on out-of-class communication (OCC), a study investigated the relationship between OCC and instructor immediacy, trust, and conversation control, and student motivation for students and faculty, based upon the theoretical framework of F.E. Millar and L.E. Rogers (1976). Participants, 274 students at two medium-sized Western universities, completed instruments measuring verbal and nonverbal immediacy, trust, conversation control, and student motivation. The nature of OCC is described in terms of its frequency, length, content, and student satisfaction. Results indicate that the frequency and content of office visits differ from that of informal contacts. Faculty behaviors which promote closeness, trust, and equality are related to the likelihood of student-faculty OCC and to student satisfaction with OCC. Student motivation is also positively correlated to the frequency, length, and satisfaction with OCC. Implications for student retention are discussed. (Contains 44 references and 2 tables of data.) (Author/RS)

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OUT-OF-CLASS COMMUNICATION

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Out-of-Class Communication Between Students and Faculty:

The Relationship to Instructor Immediacy,
Trust, and Control, and to Student Motivation

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Abstract

Research has established the important and positive relationship between informal student-faculty interactions and student retention. To add to the scant research on out-of-class communication (OCC), this study investigates the relationship between OCC and instructor immediacy, trust, and conversation control, and student motivation for students and faculty, based upon the theoretical framework of Millar and Rogers (1976). Participants, 274 students at two medium-sized Western universities, completed instruments measuring verbal and nonverbal immediacy, trust, conversation control, and student motivation. The nature of OCC is described in terms of its frequency, length, content, and student satisfaction. Results indicate that the frequency and content of office visits differ from that of informal contacts. Faculty behaviors which promote closeness, trust, and equality are related to the likelihood of student-faculty OCC and to student satisfaction with OCC. Student motivation is also positively correlated to the frequency, length, and satisfaction with OCC. Implications for student retention are discussed.

Out-of-Class Communication Between Students and Faculty:

The Relationship to Instructor Immediacy,
Trust, and Control, and to Student Motivation

Student retention has become increasingly important as universities compete for students and for limited funds. To understand the retention process, researchers have been exploring the complex relationship between individual, institutional, and environmental factors that contribute to students' decisions to remain in college. One conclusion of this research is that informal student-faculty interaction has an important and positive relationship to student persistence (Milem & Berger, 1997; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pike, Schroeder, & Berry, 1997).

Not only do students and universities benefit from student-faculty out-of-class communication (OCC) in terms of overall retention, but also students realize benefits in the improved nature of their college experience. For example, students who engage in OCC with faculty showed greater academic and cognitive development (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996), higher educational aspirations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), greater levels of academic integration into the university (Milem & Berger, 1997), and increased feelings of affirmation, confidence, and self-worth (Kuh, 1995).

Finally, faculty benefit from OCC with students in that increased student-faculty OCC is linked to higher teaching evaluations (Theophilides & Terenzini, 1981). Students rated high contact instructors as effective teachers, nominated them for more outstanding teacher awards, and reported that they taught the most stimulating courses (Wilson, Woods, & Gaff, 1974). In a

review of the literature on student-faculty interactions, Lampert (1993) reports that the student's relationship with the faculty member is the best predictor of evaluation. It appears that student-faculty OCC is valuable because of the widespread benefits to students, faculty, and the university as a whole.

In part, the likelihood of OCC is determined by faculty in-class behaviors. Students assess the in-class teaching behaviors of faculty as cues to accessibility for out-of-class discussions (Wilson et al., 1974). To determine which in-class behaviors of instructors might be studied, Nadler and Nadler (1995) suggest that interpersonal communication theory may provide a fruitful avenue for investigating the student-faculty OCC relationship. One such interpersonal communication theory is the relational approach of Millar and Rogers (1976) which identifies intimacy, control, and trust as three essential dynamics in interpersonal relationships.

Millar and Rogers (1976) define intimacy in terms of the attachment between two individuals and the degree to which each relies on the other for confirmation. The greater the degree of attachment and confirmation and the more the individuals identify with one another and "need" each other, the greater the intimacy of the relationship. Millar and Rogers' definition of intimacy is closely related to the communication variable of immediacy. Immediacy behaviors promote physical and psychological closeness between participants (Mehrabian, 1967). In the classroom, the instructor develops relationships with students as members of a class, which diminishes the level of intimacy of the relationships. In OCC, however, the student-faculty relationship is more exclusive and thus may reflect a greater intimacy. Students may perceive that instructors who promote physical and psychological closeness between themselves and students in the classroom are receptive to developing relationships with greater intimacy out of the

classroom.

Millar and Rogers (1976) define control as being "concerned with who has the right to direct, delimit, and define the actions of the interpersonal system in the presently experienced spatial-temporal situation" (p. 91). Millar and Rogers describe control in terms of one-up and one-down messages. Dominant persons are those who give one-up messages which are accepted by others' one-down responses. In the classroom, instructors are more likely to be dominant because they control procedures and discussions, and this dominance is usually accepted by students. In OCC, relationships between faculty and students may be negotiated differently, hence altering the control pattern established in the classroom. For example, students may approach faculty with specific concerns, thus determining the topic and directing the manner in which the topic is discussed. Furthermore, students may have knowledge in different areas from the instructor, giving students higher status in discussions of these areas.

Millar and Rogers (1976) define trust in a relationship in terms of the presence of trusting and trustworthy behaviors: "trusting behaviors are an admission of one's vulnerability and dependence on another and trustworthy behaviors are a recognition of that vulnerability and the obligation not to exploit it" (p. 92). Whereas students may be more dependent on the instructor in the classroom, vulnerability may be different outside of the classroom. In one-to-one conversations, students may reveal themselves more personally, and instructors may step out of the "faculty" role and appear more vulnerable to students.

This study will use Millar and Rogers' (1976) conceptual framework to examine OCC in terms of students' perceptions of their instructors' immediacy, conversation control, and trust. Furthermore, since communication education research has established the importance of student

motivation in the classroom, this study will investigate the motivation of students to determine if this is also related to OCC.

Rationale

OCC

The few studies that have been conducted on student-faculty OCC have indicated that student-faculty contact outside of the classroom is fairly infrequent and superficial (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Fusani, 1994; Nadler & Nadler, 1995). For example, Goldsmith and Albrecht (1993) found only 2.8% of 143 students had talked to an instructor outside of class about an exam. Although many studies limit OCC to visits to the instructor's office, Fusani (1994) extended the concept of OCC to include incidental interactions (e.g., chats before and after class). He found that 23% of the students surveyed had never visited or informally chatted with the instructor, and 50% had two or less contacts.

The length of OCC has also received little attention. Early studies only included interactions that were a "fairly extended talk," that is, a minimum of 10-15 minutes in length (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977; Theophilides & Terenzini, 1981; Wilson et al., 1974). Dallimore (1995), however, reported that actual time spent with the faculty member was not as important to students as what they accomplished: "students were concerned about whether or not a problem was resolved; whether it took two minutes or 20 seemed inconsequential" (p. 26). Since no study has addressed interactions less than 10 minutes, shorter interactions might also be examined to see if they are related to OCC.

According to the scant research, the content of OCC has predominantly been course-related. Fusani (1994) found that for 282 students, 84.90% of interactions were course-related,

while only 7.49% were about personal problems and 8.57% were about social topics. Course-related discussions also appear to have the most impact on persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979) and on student academic performance and intellectual development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978; Pascarella, Terenzini, & Hibel, 1978).

Satisfaction with OCC appears to be related to some aspects of verbal immediacy. Dallimore (1995) identified "quality" interactions as ones in which faculty are accessible, approachable, helpful, friendly, and flexible. She found these faculty members also provide a safe and comfortable classroom environment, provide feedback to students, and show interest in students. Fusani (1994), in a study of a community college, found OCC to be positively correlated to instructor verbal immediacy and the frequency of interactions. He calls for research to extend this investigation to four-year colleges. Other communication behaviors that have been found to be positively correlated with student satisfaction with OCC are student perceptions of instructor empathy and credibility (i.e., competence and trust) (Nadler & Nadler, 1995). To extend this limited research on OCC, the nature of OCC was addressed by the following research question:

R1: What is the nature of OCC in terms of frequency, length, content, and student satisfaction?

Immediacy

Immediacy behaviors are those which promote physical and psychological closeness between interactants (Mehrabian, 1967). Students perceive immediate instructors as accessible, involved, and effective (Andersen & Nussbaum, 1990). Educational research has centered on the following nonverbal indicators of immediacy: eye contact, gesture, movement, vocal variety, smiling, relaxed body position, touch, and posture (McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer, &

Barracclough, 1995). Although the immediacy concept was originally applied to nonverbal behaviors, it was extended to include verbal behaviors (Gorham, 1988). Instructor verbal behaviors found to be important include the following: using humor; engaging in conversations with individual students before, after, or outside of class; giving feedback; extending invitations to have students call or meet with the instructor outside of class; and giving praise.

Immediacy has been shown to influence various aspects of the educational process. For example, immediacy has been shown to be related both to affective learning (Christophel, 1990; Frymier & Shulman, 1995; Gorham, 1988; McCroskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond & Barracclough, 1996; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990) and cognitive learning (Frymier & Shulman, 1995; Gorham, 1988; McCroskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond, & Barracclough, 1996). Research also supports the theory proposed by Christophel (1990) and Richmond (1990) that immediacy modifies student motivation which leads to increased positive affect for both the instructor and the course.

Although no research has investigated the relationship between nonverbal immediacy and OCC, student attitudes toward nonverbally immediate instructors seem likely to promote OCC. It is likely that students would interpret nonverbally immediate instructors as accessible for OCC for several reasons: 1) students evaluate nonverbally immediate instructors as more effective (McCroskey et al., 1995); 2) nonverbal immediacy influences students' affective and cognitive learning; and 3) instructors cue students as to accessibility for OCC by in-class behaviors (Wilson et al., 1974). Furthermore, if nonverbal immediacy influences student motivation and leads to increased positive affect for the instructor and the course, it is probable that students may be more likely to seek out these instructors and expect to have satisfying relationships with them.

Fusani (1994) found that verbal immediacy and the frequency of OCC were correlated and provided the two strongest predictors of student satisfaction with OCC. Therefore, the relationships between OCC and verbal and nonverbal immediacy may be positive:

R2: Are student perceptions of instructor verbal and nonverbal immediacy positively correlated to OCC?

Trust

Trust can be measured on two levels--general trust (trust of people in general) and individualized trust (trust of a specific person) (Wheless, 1978). Although both types of trust may influence students' relationships with instructors and their willingness to seek out instructors for OCC, instructor behaviors contribute directly to individualized trust. Wheless and Grotz (1977) define individualized trust as:

a process [authors' emphasis] of holding certain relevant, favorable perceptions of another person which engender certain types of dependent behaviors in a risky situation where the expected outcomes that are dependent upon that other person(s) are not known with certainty. (p. 251)

Students may perceive OCC as "risky" and, therefore, might be more likely to engage in OCC with an instructor that they trust. Although no previous research has specifically studied the relationship between OCC and individualized trust, Nadler and Nadler (1995) explored the relationship between OCC and instructor credibility, measured along the dimensions of competence and trustworthiness. Trustworthiness was significantly correlated to the number of out-of-class visits students made, to student satisfaction, and to students' positive evaluation of the instructor. Similarly, it would be expected that the frequency and satisfaction with OCC would

be positively correlated to the individualized trust of the instructor by the student:

R3: Are student perceptions of instructor trust positively correlated to OCC?

Control

Educational research on control has focused on the bases of power and communicative strategies instructors use in their attempts to exert power over students (McCroskey & Richmond, 1983; Richmond & McCroskey, 1984; Kearney, Plax, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1984, 1985; McCroskey, Richmond, Plax, & Kearney, 1985; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986; Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, & Plax, 1987). The conclusions of this research are that instructors' use of prosocial behavior altering techniques (BATs) (i.e., rewards from instructors) are associated with cognitive and affective learning, whereas instructors' use of negative BATs (i.e., punishment from instructors) reduces cognitive and affective learning.

Furthermore, in the classroom, instructors who use powerful language (a concise, direct style of language rather than a style that contains multiple hesitations) receive more favorable ratings (Haleta, 1996). This is consistent with studies on powerful/powerless language which show that powerful language is perceived as more persuasive and more credible than powerless language (for a review, see Burrell & Koper, 1990). It appears that in the classroom, instructors are most effective when they control through prosocial BATs and when they use powerful language.

In contrast to the classroom where legitimate power is held by the instructor, faculty who exercise less control in OCC may receive more visits from students. For example, Nadler and Nadler (1996) investigated the role the relational topoi identified by Burgoon and Hale (1984) had on the advising relationship. Of the relational topoi dimensions, control is best reflected by

dominance. Nadler and Nadler found that as the dominance of the adviser increased, students placed less value on advising and visited the adviser less often.

OCC can occur in the instructor's office, during informal chats on campus, and before and after class. In the instructor's office and before or after class, the power of the instructor may still be part of the context in that the office and the classroom are the instructor's domain. This may not be as true during informal chats on campus. Therefore, the context of the interaction may be important for understanding how students and faculty negotiate control in OCC. One aspect of student-faculty interactions is conversation control, i.e., who brings up topics and controls the discussion. No previous research has analyzed the relationship between student perceptions of instructor conversation control and the frequency and content of OCC. These will be addressed by the following research question:

R4: What is the relationship between OCC and instructor conversation control?

Student Motivation

Student motivation has been found to be an important moderating variable between instructor behaviors and student learning (Richmond, 1990). For example, instructor immediacy modifies motivation as a predictor of learning (Christophel & Gorham, 1995), and making content relevant to students' personal and career goals is associated with state motivation to study (Frymier & Shulman, 1995). The relationship between instructor immediacy and state motivation appears to be that "immediate teachers cause students to appreciate or value the learning task which, in turn, causes students to learn cognitively" (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996, p. 303). Student motivation in a course has not been studied in relationship to OCC. Fusani (1994) did include an item in his satisfaction measure asking students if OCC improved motivation, but no

studies have analyzed if student motivation in the course is related to the student's likelihood of interacting with the instructor outside of class. The relationship between student motivation and OCC will be addressed by the following research question:

R5: What is the relationship between OCC and student motivation?

Method

Sample

Participants were 274 students at two medium-sized Western universities, one public and one private. Participants included 100 males and 172 females (2 provided no data on sex), ranging in age from 18 to 60, with the mean age of 23.6. There were 85 freshmen, 42 sophomores, 72 juniors, 72 seniors, and 1 graduate student. The ethnic backgrounds of participants were as follows: 2.2% African American, .4% American Indian, 12.4% Asian, 1.1% Filipino, .4% Hispanic, non-Mexican, 12.8% Mexican American, .7% Pacific Islander, 61.3% white, and 2.9% other, and 5.8% provided no data on ethnicity.

In order to obtain data on a variety of instructors from a variety of disciplines, students were asked to respond to the questionnaire based on the instructor and the class they had attended most recently before the class in which they were completing the questionnaire. Students filled out the questionnaire anonymously in the last month of the semester, giving them ample time to interact with the instructor over the course of the semester. The students represented 26 majors. The instructors and classes students evaluated represented 27 content areas. The instructors included 174 males and 96 females with the following ethnic backgrounds: 3.6% African American, 8.4% Asian, .4% Hispanic, non-Mexican, 4.4% Mexican American, 77% white, .4% other, and 5.8% provided no data on ethnicity.

Instrumentation

Nonverbal immediacy. Nonverbal immediacy was measured by the Revised Nonverbal Immediacy Measure (RNIM) (McCroskey et al., 1996). It is a 10-item Likert-type response scale that assesses students' perceptions of their instructors' nonverbal behaviors, such as gesturing, smiling, and using a variety of vocal expressions, with no context specified.

Verbal immediacy. Verbal immediacy was measured by the Verbal Immediacy Behaviors (VIB) instrument (Gorham, 1988). The 17-item Likert-type response scale assesses students' perceptions of their instructors' verbal behaviors, including using humor, providing personal examples, and addressing students by name, again with no context specified.

Trust. Trust was measured by the Individualized Trust Scale (Wheless & Grotz, 1977). The scale has 15 sets of bipolar semantic differential items assessing the trust students have in the specific instructor they are rating. Typical items are trustworthy/untrustworthy, considerate/inconsiderate, and honest/dishonest.

Conversation control. Conversation control was measured by 10 items using a Likert-type response scale. The items assessed students' perceptions of instructor behaviors in conversations, particularly whether the instructor controlled the conversation or shared that control with the student. The items were generated from affinity-seeking strategies that related to conversation control such as whether the instructor tried to control the interaction with the student and whether the instructor treated the student as an equal. These items will be referred to as the Conversation Control Scale (CCS). (The CCS is available upon request from the authors.)

Student motivation. Student motivation was measured by the Student Motivation Scale (SMS) (Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994). The SMS consists of 16 sets of bipolar, semantic

differential items, such as motivated/unmotivated, involved/uninvolved, and stimulated/not stimulated. In this study, students were asked to report their motivation concerning the specific class which they were rating.

Frequency, length, content, and satisfaction with OCC. Participants were asked to assess interactions with the instructor in two contexts: in his/her office and outside of formal class time but not in his/her office (i.e., before or after class, at break time, or on campus). For office and informal OCC interactions, students estimated number of interactions, average length of interactions, and percentage of time spent on course work, personal problems, and socializing. Students also gave an overall rating of satisfaction with OCC.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were obtained for frequency, length, content, and satisfaction with OCC. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients were employed to analyze the relationship between OCC and verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, trust, conversation control, and student motivation. An alpha of .05 was utilized to determine the statistical significance of these results.

Results

The reliabilities of the scales using Cronbach's alpha were as follows: RNIM, $\alpha=.82$; VIB, $\alpha=.88$; ITS, $\alpha=.94$; CCC, $\alpha=.81$; and SMS, $\alpha=.91$. Table 1 provides data relevant to the first research question regarding the frequency, length, content, and satisfaction with OCC. For frequency of office visits, 127 students (50%) reported having visited the instructor's office and 126 (50%) reported never having done so. For frequency of informal contact, 162 students (68%) reported having spoken to the instructor before or after class or

informally on campus, whereas 75 (32%) reported never having spoken informally to the instructor. The mode for length of office visits was 6-10 minutes, and the mode for length of informal contact was 1-5 minutes. Concerning satisfaction with OCC, on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied), students responses averaged a 5 (somewhat satisfied).

Table 2 reports correlations between aspects of OCC and verbal and nonverbal immediacy, trust, conversation control and student motivation. In regard to the second research question which explored the relationship between immediacy and OCC, the frequency of office visits was significantly correlated with verbal immediacy ($r = .32$), and the frequency of informal contact was correlated to verbal immediacy ($r = .39$) and nonverbal immediacy ($r = .23$). The length of office visits was correlated to both verbal immediacy ($r = .30$) and nonverbal immediacy ($r = .24$), and student satisfaction was correlated to verbal immediacy ($r = .55$) and nonverbal immediacy ($r = .38$). Discussion of course work during informal contact was negatively correlated to verbal immediacy ($r = -.27$), socializing during informal contact was positively correlated to verbal immediacy ($r = .26$), and socializing during office visits was positively correlated to nonverbal immediacy ($r = .22$).

The results of the third research question, which addressed the relationship between trust and OCC, indicated that trust was positively correlated to the frequency of informal contact ($r = .14$), student satisfaction ($r = .49$), and socializing during informal contact ($r = .15$). Trust was negatively correlated to the discussion of personal problems during informal contact ($r = -.16$).

The results of the fourth research question, which addressed the relationship between conversation control and OCC, indicated that conversation control was negatively correlated to the frequency of informal contact ($r = -.18$), student satisfaction ($r = -.38$), and the length of office

visits ($r = -.24$). Conversation control was positively correlated to the discussion of course work during informal contact ($r = .23$).

The results of the fifth research question, investigating the relationship between student motivation and OCC, indicated that student motivation was a prominent variable--positively related to the frequency of office visits ($r = .30$) and informal contact ($r = .20$), the length of office visits ($r = .29$), socializing informally ($r = .24$), and student satisfaction ($r = .45$), but negatively related to discussing course work during informal contact ($r = -.19$).

Discussion

This study examined OCC between students and faculty using the interpersonal communication framework of Millar and Rogers (1976). The communication variables of immediacy (verbal and nonverbal), trust, and conversation control were identified as those which most closely reflect Millar and Rogers' conceptual framework. Furthermore, since research indicates that students assess the in-class teaching behaviors of faculty for cues to accessibility for OCC (Wilson et al., 1974), these variables provide the means to investigate how faculty in-class behaviors influence OCC. Although the measures in this study were based on retrospective student impressions rather than actual assessments of behavior, the results offer some potentially useful insights into instructor immediacy, trust, conversation control, and student motivation.

Nature of OCC

Previous research has found OCC to be fairly infrequent. The present study reinforces this since 50% of the students reported never visiting the instructor's office and 32% had never informally interacted with their instructor on campus or before or after class. Since research has documented the relationship between the frequency of OCC and student retention, these

percentages highlight an area of concern. The current study added the element of context to the analysis of frequency of OCC by distinguishing between visits to the instructor's office from informal contact (e.g., chats before or after class, or informally on campus). The results indicate that visits to the instructor's office are different from informal contact in frequency, length, and content, and therefore should be considered separately. The greater frequency of informal contact as compared to office visits suggests that informal contact with faculty is an important avenue for OCC for many students. The difference in socializing (3.6% of office visits; 28.4% of informal contact) also suggests that faculty and students use informal contact to get to know one another personally, beyond the scope of the course content, more often than they do during office visits. Faculty wishing to develop OCC should consider initiating informal chats before and after class and making themselves assessable for informal chats on campus.

Student Satisfaction with OCC

The instructor behaviors that were positively correlated to student satisfaction are those which promote physical and psychological closeness between faculty and students, i.e. verbal and nonverbal immediacy, and trust. In contrast, conversation control, which accentuates inequality between students and faculty, was negatively correlated to student satisfaction. The out-of-class relationship between faculty and students is most satisfying to students when immediacy and trust are increased and control decreased. However, it should be noted that instructor behaviors alone do not determine this satisfaction; students who are motivated in the course find OCC more satisfying.

Frequency of OCC

The frequency of office visits was positively correlated to student motivation. Since

students visit the instructor's office to discuss course work 92% of the time, it seems reasonable that students motivated in the course would be more likely to seek out this additional discussion or assistance. The only instructor behavior that was related to frequency of office visits was verbal immediacy. Faculty can increase the likelihood of OCC by using language that engages their students and creates rapport.

As with frequency of office visits, motivated students were more likely to engage in informal contact with faculty. Furthermore, informal contact with faculty was promoted by instructor behaviors which encourage closeness and equality (increased verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, and trust, and decreased conversation control).

Length of OCC

The length of office visits was related to the instructor behaviors of increased immediacy and reduced control, and to student motivation. The length of informal contact was not influenced by any variables studied. Informal contact, averaging 1-5 minutes, appears to be regulated, at least in part, by the interval available between classes for such discussion.

Content of OCC

Concerning the content of discussions during office visits, no variables studied were significantly correlated to discussion of course work or personal problems. It appears that students recognize that office visits are necessary when they want to discuss course work regardless of the instructor's behaviors, and few students discuss personal problems with instructors. Socializing, however, was positively correlated to nonverbal immediacy. Nonverbally immediate instructors appear to make students feel at ease and encourage, through their behaviors, some socializing in the office.

The relationship between the content of informal contact and the variables in this study yielded the most perplexing results. Verbal immediacy and student motivation were negatively correlated to the discussion of course work during informal contact, but conversation control was positively correlated to the discussion of course work during informal contact. Instructors who are in control of conversations get approached about course work during these short interactions (approximately 1-5 minutes). Perhaps students realize that they can get answers to course work questions quickly from an instructor who likes to control the discussion. Also, it appears that more-highly motivated students may be more inclined to visit the instructor's office for these discussions rather than choose the shorter informal contacts. The discussion of personal problems during informal contact was negatively related to trust. It is difficult to understand why students would avoid discussing personal problems with instructors they trust during informal contacts. One possible explanation is the lack of privacy during these interactions. Finally, socializing during informal contact was related to the instructor behaviors of inviting interaction (high verbal immediacy) and reducing control (low conversation control).

Conclusion and Future Research

The results of this study substantiate previous research which suggests that instructor behaviors do cue students as to accessibility for OCC. Specifically, behaviors which promote physical and psychological closeness, trust, and equality are related to the likelihood of these interactions occurring and to student satisfaction with OCC. This study has also suggested that the out-of-class relationship between faculty and students can be viewed as an interpersonal relationship. As such, the out-of-class relationship found most satisfying for students is one where closeness and trust are promoted and where instructors share control with students. Finally, this

study demonstrates that an analysis of instructor characteristics is not sufficient for understanding student-faculty relations--student characteristics, such as motivation, must also be considered.

Although the present study investigated student-faculty out-of-class relationships using Millar and Rogers' (1976) framework for interpersonal relationships, Millar and Rogers suggest that a relationship must be analyzed in terms of the development of a system's structure rather than in terms of the individual characteristics brought to the situation by each participant. This study has explored three of the basic concepts that apply to the structure of the student-faculty relationship, but only from the perspective of students. To more fully analyze the student-faculty relationship, perceptions of instructors towards specific students must also be analyzed to determine the nature of the relationship negotiated. Furthermore, to determine the nature of this negotiated relationship, researchers might analyze specific content of student-faculty conversations, measure actual instructor behaviors, and identify who initiates the encounter (students or faculty) and the reasons for the encounter.

Future research on OCC should also continue to study both office visits and informal contacts. However, it should distinguish between these types of contact because they are different in frequency, content, and length. The content of informal contact also deserves further study--why is trust inversely related to discussion of personal problems in informal contacts, and why are instructors who are controlling in conversations more likely to discuss course work during informal contacts?

Finally, this study suggests the need to further investigate OCC in light of student retention. Instructor behaviors that promote closeness and equality are positively related to student satisfaction with OCC and to the frequency of these contacts. These types of contacts

would seem to integrate students into the intellectual and social life of the institution, a key factor which has been identified for student retention. Training faculty to encourage students to interact with them and to be accessible for such interaction, as well as developing student-faculty programs which promote informal interactions may be fruitful avenues for increasing student retention.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of OCC

Aspects of OCC	Range	Mean	SD
Frequency of Office Visits	0-20	1.5	2.7
Frequency of Informal Contact	0-40	3.0	4.9
Length of Office Visits	1-5	2.4	1.2
Length of Informal Contact	1-5	1.4	.9
Discuss Course Work during Office Visits	0-100%	91.9	19.6
Discuss Course Work during Informal Contact	0-100%	66.7	41.7
Discuss Personal Problems during Office Visits	0-100%	4.4	15.1
Discuss Personal Problems during Informal Contact	0-100%	4.6	13.8
Socialize during Office Visits	0-100%	3.6	11.5
Socialize during Informal Contact	0-100%	28.4	40.4
Student Satisfaction	1-7	5.2	1.7

Table 2

Correlations Between OCC and Verbal Immediacy, Nonverbal Immediacy, Trust, and Student Motivation

Aspects of OCC	Verbal	Nonverbal	Conversation		Student
	Immediacy	Immediacy	Trust	Control	Motivation
Frequency of Office Visits	.32*	.09	.02	-.04	.30*
Frequency of Informal Contact	.39*	.23*	.14*	-.18*	.20*
Length of Office Visits	.30*	.24*	.02	-.24*	.29*
Length of Informal Contact	.11	.09	.02	-.09	.09
Discuss Course Work during Office Visits	-.10	-.14	.00	-.00	-.11
Discuss Course Work during Informal Contact	-.27*	-.06	-.10	.23*	-.19*
Discuss Personal Problems during Office Visits	.04	.01	-.05	.01	.06
Discuss Personal Problems during Informal Contact	.07	-.02	-.16*	.00	-.11
Socialize during Office Visits	.11	.22*	.07	.00	.10
Socialize during Informal Contact	.26*	.07	.15*	-.24*	.24*
Student Satisfaction	.55*	.38*	.49*	-.38*	.45*

*Correlations significant at the .05 level